



March 3, 2021

To: House Finance Committee

RE: The Nursing Home Staffing & Quality Care Act Legislation **HB5012**

I am writing on behalf of The Nursing Home Staffing & Quality Care Act legislation presented to our State Legislators. Newport Partnership for Families was established in 1990 as a collaboration of social service agencies, educational administrators and staff, city representatives, businesses and community members to address the needs of children and families in the City of Newport. Through our partnerships, we directly align funding and focus on four areas: Summer Learning: Reading Reaps Rewards (R3); CEATRI (Chronic Early Absenteeism and Truancy); Family Safety and Security; and Newport for All Ages.

Newport for All Ages (Age Friendly) has at its core a goal to create an age friendly city for all 45 and older. Part of our particular focus addresses the needs of the elderly. Carmella Geer, Executive Director of the Edward King House in Newport, is one of our most vocal members working on the front lines with this population. During the COVID-19 crisis, the plight of our elders has been at the forefront of our weekly Newport Partnership for Families COVID response meetings. Paying our Nursing Home Staff a higher rate and having a 1:4 "Staff to Elder" ratio is at the top of our Age Friendly work. It is evident that elders in nursing homes have been chiefly impacted these past many months and there needs to be significant changes made to ensure we have proper staffing. Currently Rhode Island ranks 41st (tied with Iowa) in the U.S. for the average hours of care nursing home residents receive, this is unacceptable!

On a personal note, I have a dear friend (a Star Kids mother who I have known for over a decade) whose daughter worked as an intern at a Middletown Nursing Home. The stories that this mother shared about her daughter's employment at said nursing home causes great consternation. This student was treated as a subservient servant, abhorrent treatment. Fortunately, this student did her "student hours" and has secured more humane employment at a different island nursing home. We should be ashamed.

Based on current projections, the number of elderly in Newport is expected to rise. Thus, there will be continued demand on our nursing home and home care services. **WE NEED TO ACT NOW!!** Let's ensure proper hours of care for the residents and proper pay for the STAFF who SERVE our parents, friends and community members. On behalf of Newport Partnership for Families, we ask that you respectfully support legislative Bill number HB7624 set before you today.

Kindly,

Kathleen M. Burke

Kathleen M. Burke, Executive Director

Newport Partnership for Families

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